

Lecture 5

Zen concepts from Daisetz Suzuki's Zen and Japanese Culture:

1. no-mind (mushin) "Prajna Immovable": moving but not moving. Continuous movement without stopping to think needlessly about something.
2. Myoyu and creativity
3. Sword of Life/Death

Political narrative (see lecture slides)

- Shugo/jitô are shogun-appointed
- Onin war is the beginning of the warring states period. Starts from a shogunal dispute. Creates 10 years of total conflict, centered in Kyoto (which was burned and pillaged) but extended out into the provinces. By the time the war ended, the provinces were relatively independent.
- The Daimyo and their vassal system were somewhat similar to what we consider European feudalism

Note on guns: guns arrived in the 16th century from the Portuguese; then they were strictly controlled by the Tokugawas, who banned their possession.

Film: clip from Seven Samurai

What does Suzuki mean by "sword of Life / sword of Death"?

- the sword of death kills enemies, but also your ego
- sword defends life; sword defends things worth living for
- sword can include a humble outlook; as seen in Seven Samurai, Kanbei and others were very humble about their skills
- doing all you can to save lives instead of just rushing in and hitting things

What's myoyu? What's creativity in swordsmanship?

- unconscious improvising/creating that happens during the state of no-mind
- "Moon in the water": neither the moon nor the water intend to make the moon-in-the-water, but it happens [and it's beautiful]
- this non-intentionality having a creative aspect

Discussion of which of the 7 Samurai is an "ideal" samurai – most think it is the leader, but there's some opinion towards "put all 7 together and you've got the full ideal."